

...DEBORAH AND JAEI...

— SERMON TO THE —

I. B. W. WOMAN'S CLUB.



BY

Rev. Reverdy C. Ransom,



AT

Bethel A. M. E. Church,

CHICAGO ILL.



Sunday, June 6, 1897.

Crystal Print—2642 State St., Chicago.

We have with us, to night as guests of the church, who have come to worship with us the I. B. W. Woman's Club. We are pleased to greet them and call attention, as a basis for our remarks to-night, to the Fifth Chapter of Judges and 24th verse, which reads as follows:

"Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent."

We have in this very beautiful chapter and in the one that precedes it, presented to us, two of the most remarkable women in biblical history. Deborah was at one time ruler of Israel. She judged Israel at a time when, because the nation was threatened by a neighboring kingdom her mighty men of valor and her men of war had become awed into submission and had lost courage, their enemies came up to fight against them; but Deborah sent for Barak the son of Abinoam and told him to call the men of war to arms and go out to battle to meet the enemies of their nation. But Barak, captain of the hosts of Israel, had not the courage to go to war leading the armies alone, and said to Deborah, "I cannot go, except you go with me."

So, it was the patriotism and courage of a woman who inspired the men of Israel to go out to meet their Kanaanitish foes and fight until victory perched upon their standards. Side by side with Deborah, we place another woman, Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite who, when the armies of Sisera were being routed and he had fled from his chariot, invited him to come into her tent; and while he hid himself and had fallen asleep she took the tent pin and the hammer and drove it through his temples pinning him to the ground, thus slaying the chief enemy and persecutor of her race.

We set these women before you to-night as the saviours of their race and of their nation and the deliverers of their country. And now we turn to sound through the gospel which we preach, the note of deliverance, for the gospel of the Son of God means deliverance—from everything that degrades, from everything that injures, from everything that tarnishes, from everything that destroys. Christianity can do nothing higher and better than to make man truly man. That is in part its mission in the world. Its highest and chief mission is the production of manhood, and of womanhood.

Whenever we lose sight of this truth, we have lost sight of the vital principle of Christianity. All of these services and sermons and means of grace are used by the church of God that men and women may be made better by being lifted up into a purer atmosphere and made to stand upon a higher and loftier plane; so that, as we have said, the mission of Christianity in the world is the production of manhood and womanhood. Not only so, but Christianity produces the higher type of man. When the gospel of the Son of God has wrought its processes on heart and brain, it gives as the finished product the highest type of man that can be produced on earth. Take the other forms of religious or of ethical beliefs, and we find that the highest man they produce does not measure up to the standard of the Christian man.

The very best Chinaman that you can find is a product of the very best that Confucianism can do in the production of manhood; but the highest type of man that Confucianism produces does not measure up to the highest type of man that Christianity produces. If you search in India, the highest type of man that you find in India is an example of the very best that the religion of Buddha can do in the production of manhood; but we do not believe that the Buddhist measures up to the

Christian man. If you go to the Turkish Empire and find the best man in Turkey, you have an example of the very best that Mohammedism can do in the production of manhood; but the men of these nations and of these religious beliefs do not measure up to the products of Christianity in Europe and on this hemisphere. Turning to our land and our own institutions, we find that America produces the largest man of any other nation or civilization under heaven; the largest in heart and brain. America produces the most prosperous man on the face of the earth. These institutions of ours have given to the individual the largest degree of prosperity enjoyed by the masses of the people any place on the face of the earth. America produces the brainiest man on the face of the earth, and it produces the happiest man on the face of the earth; because the foundation principles of our government rest upon manhood and not upon race, not upon creed, not upon blood: but the manhood of our race has suffered in this land—has been dwarfed in this land.

In the midst of these free institutions and under our flag, the Afro-American has suffered, the Afro American has been dwarfed, the Afro-American has been defiled and despised; but if our manhood has suffered, through the horrors of slavery, our womanhood suffered more. It was degradation of womanhood to the lowest plane.

I believe our sisters will forgive me if, for a moment, I turn your eyes to that which is but recent history. Our womanhood was degraded by the slave hut. No woman under heaven could develop and grow into large proportions under those conditions. The miserable hovel or hut which she was compelled to call her home and the conditions under which she was compelled to live, meant the stamping out of the higher and nobler instincts in her nature and the degradation of womanhood. The springs of maternal affection were almost sapped by that abominable and damnable system. Wifely devotion was made almost impossible. The purer instincts of our womanhood were deadened by the brutal system of slavery from which we have just come. Not only this, but our womanhood was deprived of that which is necessary to womanhood everywhere. She was not permitted to inspire her men to deeds of noble action; and a manhood which lacks the inspiration of womanhood will never produce very many heroes, will never write its name very high in the annals of human history.

You may take any nation that has ever played a part in history and you will find that woman has been the inspiration of the poet's song, that woman has been the inspiration that gave the artist skill to handle the chisel and to mix his colors, that woman has been the inspiration of the warrior, of the philosopher and of the king. But our manhood had not the inspiration of its women, could not have it; they could not inspire nor cheer us to worthy and to noble service. While they were not permitted to do this, our manhood was not permitted to protect and defend them. Our womanhood has been unprotected and defenseless throughout all the centuries here and only within very recent years has it been protected. So that we could not expect a manhood upon the one hand to be inspired to lofty and to worthy action, nor a womanhood which was not protected and defended by its men, to have that strength which was so necessary. But during the past thirty years our womanhood has had some delightful experiences—experiences which have been as new as they have been delightful. For the first time she has had a home which she could call her own;

or the first time she has had the delightful experience of seeing her children with their books marching away to school awakening in her breast new and pleasurable emotion.

At last her husband has become her protector and her king; not only has he become her protector, but her husband has become in a sense her master and her king. No woman—no womanhood—can respect a man or manhood which is under the power of some other man; no race women are going to respect their men when their men are subservient held under authority and under the power of another class of men in the community; and it has been impossible for our womanhood—it is a hard thing to say—but it has been impossible for our womanhood to look up to our manhood with any inspiration, because they could not do so. They could not look up with confidence and be inspired by the life of a manhood that was kicked and cursed and driven by another class of men; they could not look up with confidence and pride to men who were soon; they own masters, but were mastered by other men; they could not look up with pride and confidence to a manhood which could not stand in the relation to them of protector, while some other man at his own caprice or volition could come and separate between him and her.

That has been the unhappy history and condition which our women have had to pass through all these dark and weary years. The wonder is that our womanhood has not been sunken and debased beyond all measure of comprehension. And after a few years our womanhood can look up to our manhood as one who has no master but God, who stands in the relation to her of protector. To-day her husband is her "lord" and her "king." She has no other—or should have.

Women are natural hero-worshippers, more so than men; and there must be something akin to the hero in a man to take a woman's heart by storm, and to hold her affection and devotion throughout the years. But the kind of heroes that we have presented have not been very inspiring, and the women among us who have had some cultivation and some intelligence, have found in the ranks of our men in the years that have past so few who were their equals. If our men desire to keep our women strong and pure and good and hold their admiration, they must show to our women on the one hand, that they have independence and strength, and on the other, they must stand on an equal plane with other men everywhere.

When our colored women as they walk the streets of our cities, see the hosts of colored men whose personal appearance is such that as they look upon them, they can feel no swellings of pride, this fact, has a tendency to render them a prey to temptation. I am glad that the time is coming, and has come, when the preacher is not the only man in the community who wears Sunday clothes through the week; because when there is only one man, or only two or three men who thus appear on other days except on Sunday, it is dangerous. When our women walk the streets of the city day by day, morning, afternoon and night and see white men with clean clothes on, their shoes well polished, with every appearance of gentility; and then when they meet our men clumping along, looking all sorts of ways, it does not give to them that pride in our manhood which is one of the necessary elements to add to their strength. But now, as we have said, the time has come when our men are becoming to our women their kings, their princes and their protectors; and that is having the tendency to add unto their

strength. Our women have had within the last thirty years the inspiring spectacle of placing their aspirations and their hopes upon the development and the training of their children; and they have been permitted to see their children, for whom they have made so many sacrifices, reach the goal, pass through the courses in our schools, in our colleges, in our universities and take respectable places in life.

A man said to me within the past week, that one of the most inspiring spectacles he had ever beheld was, when some years ago, the man who stands before you to-night, stood before two or three thousand people, after years of sacrifice, to speak his oration upon the day of his graduation. At the conclusion of that speech, while many were shouting and applauding, a woman arose from the audience, pushed her way through the crowd, made her way up to the platform, pushed by the dignitaries that were seated there, came and fell with her arms about him, and with her hot tears falling upon his cheek and almost smothered him with kisses there. It was my mother: and he said, when he took that woman by the hand, he was almost shocked; he said, "that hand was as rough and as hard as the hand of some laboring man." But that hand had grown hard through the sacrifices inspired by love and maternal affection that her boy might reach the goal of his ambition, and that she might give him to the world to make an honorable place in life.

What was the inspiration of that mother (she was almost a God to me,) has been the inspiration of thousands of others all over this country within the last thirty years. And these are some of the experiences that are new which our women are learning. Our women have seen, or have begun to see, the beginnings of social life and culture. We find that we are not cultured yet, that social life among us is very crude, we have only the rudiments of it. Time was when all colored people indiscriminately mixed and mingled together, and if you refused to mix and mingle they would stone you as the Jews stoned Stephen. But there is coming a time—the day is almost at hand—when the better elements among us are beginning to class themselves together and they are saying to those who are not fit for respectable association; if you want to stand on this plane, you must qualify yourself by virtue, by intelligence and culture so to stand." It has long been the custom to class all colored people together without regard to intelligence, morals or manners, but as we have said, we are beginning to find the rudiments of social life and that which may be with some propriety called society is beginning to make its appearance among us. If the lines are drawn with wisdom and intelligence, it will be for the advancement of our race and a blessed thing. If you were to ask me where is the society of Chicago? I would have to tell you I do not know. It is none of my business either. I was not sent here for that purpose, neither for that purpose did I come, having a mission to all mankind, I love good and bad. But while that is true upon the one hand, it ought also to be true on the other hand that the lines would be so drawn that men who disgrace their manhood could not sit in the parlors of the respectable, that the man who, perhaps had the day before been in a place of questionable resort, or in the gambling "hells" of this city, could appear in the open gaze of the world with the best of our women leaning on his arm; that our men could not have, as they do have in some cities, "one girl down town and another girl up town."

But we are making a beginning and the better elements among us, through the inspiration and growth of a better sentiment among our

women, are beginning to appear and to stamp with the seal of their disapproval that which tends to blight and mar the better life of our people. Our womanhood is getting a back-ground which is permitting nobler qualities to be brought out. The best qualities of our womanhood could not be brought out against that dark and terrible back-ground against which it had to stand during all the centuries of its life in this country; but now our women are getting a back-ground—the back-ground of a home, which they can call their own—with their husband, their protector standing there and their children round about them. With that back-ground their nobler qualities are beginning to shine out and cause them to compare favorably with other elements of the womanhood of this country. Not only is this true but they are getting a back-ground which is permitting their virtues to shine out and men are beginning to discover that the character and the virtue and the strength of our womanhood are not things that can be invaded at will. Our womanhood is beginning to lift its eyes beyond the horizon of its doorsteps. Just yesterday, so to speak, have they begun to do this, for they have been so busy in the last few years within the home; but now we are beginning to produce a class of women who lift up their eyes and are looking beyond their doorstep and they are beginning to study and think upon the great questions that affect them and the country at large and that affect all the larger interests of our whole life.

This is only the beginning. The signs have only just appeared within the past few years; but in almost every avenue, in almost every line of endeavor, our womanhood is showing its capabilities to take its place side by side with our manhood in the field of action in the greatest and largest questions of our day and time.

The organization which has come to worship with us to-night has a few representatives of this new departure upon the part of our women into the larger fields. And I want to say to the ladies that I honor you for doing honor to an honorable and a worthy woman. We have had so few women who have had an opportunity to distinguish themselves upon the larger fields of action. And when one has gone into the rich fields of endeavor and distinguished herself there, we should give her all honor that her deeds and achievements may be an inspiration to the young girls that shall come after her. Honor to whom honor is due. I speak no words of fulsome praise. The organization which meets here to-night has honored itself and honored Chicago and honored the womanhood of the race by taking the name it bears, "The I. B. W. Woman's Club," a name which is known in almost every portion of the Western Hemisphere where the English language is spoken. A girl who started out in one of our southern cities as an orphan girl, left without mother or father at an early age, without protector or defender, by the strength of her own character she was mother and father, protector and friend to the brothers and sisters who had been left with her orphaned thus; going out as a girl to be an instructor and teacher of her people, and whenever her womanhood was trampled upon, standing up with all courage in defense not only of her womanhood but her citizen rights. When the men of Tennessee, standing face to face with the blood of their brethren who had been murdered in cold blood crying from the ground were silent, this girl had the courage to speak out, the courage to speak the courageous word when the men and the manhood of the race ought to have rushed to the defense. For this she was compelled to be an exile or forfeit her life

and started upon this mission to most of the larger centers of this country which heard such invective, such eloquence, such denunciation, such appeals to righteousness and truth under the constitution and the laws as this country had never heard before. She met the opposition of leading men of the race, in the church and in politics; they thought it was a mistake. And yet she pushed her crusade in this country and across the waters until she filled the world with the cry of the Negro's wrongs. She so rung the story of the outrages in this country into the ears and into the hearts of the American people, that now the great metropolitan dailies in this country and the public sentiment of England have been aroused: I say this to-night because I want to weave, while preaching to this club, a crown of evergreen and place it on the brow of that little woman who has wrought so gloriously in this cause for our race. And this after thirty years is an illustration of the kind of women that we can produce. She did not do it for fame; she did not do it for money. I have tramped the streets with her through the wind and the storm and rain, in mud and mire, that she might go to assemblies of men of influence and power and there plead to them the story of our wrongs and seek redress. And what I have known her to do she has done all over this country, so that to-night while receiving these guests with their honored name, we do double honor, by giving honor to whom honor is due. A character like that, God builds for war, he has got to make them in a certain way so they can fight: and he fixed her up with that kind of courage. He did not send her into this world to weave bouquets and to make apologies for wrongs; but to speak straight out and talk right on: so that we have some of the first fruits of our womanhood here to-night. And while she has wrought in this field, in almost all of the larger fields her womanhood is beginning to secure a foothold.

We have perhaps foremost among the women that are engaged in the work of training our girls, that matchless woman Fannie Jackson Coppin who in her school in Philadelphia, has accomplished a wonderful work—an illustration of the growing strength of our womanhood and we have in art Edmonia Lewis, who has won for herself a respectable place; and we have one of the first in that line, Hallie Quinn Brown, our elocutionist who now in London, has gained some notoriety; and we have in song as one of the first fruits in that line, Selika—all honor to Selika the pioneer!

Now the hosts have come and are following in her footsteps. But these women among others have begun to make the way possible. In the field of literature and journalism there is rising up a host. One in our city is taking a respectable place—that is Mrs. Fannie B. Williams.

So Chicago and Philadelphia and the little country-sides are coming to the front with a type of womanhood that our race can produce. Now, another phase—and I shall detain you but a few moments more. These clubs are formed of the very best heart and very best brain of our race to study the great questions of domestic economy, questions that relate to the home; and I tell you my friends, that if ever there was a class of women that needed to study these questions, it is our women. They are not only studying questions domestic, but questions intellectual and questions social and questions political; and the organization which is here to-night, "The I. B. W. Woman's Club," is only one of a great number that are springing up in different parts of the country. Our womanhood is becoming aroused and awakened;

and I only pray God that our manhood may be worthy of it.

And now, men, the thing that we must do is to protect this womanhood. Why is all this trouble in the country from time to time about white men putting to death with impunity colored men? Why they say, "Our womanhood has been molested and the man that defiles our womanhood we will crush; we will kill." There is one thing that the Negroes of this country want to learn and that is to respect its womanhood, not to accost them too familiarly upon the streets; but with all dignity and honor; and then when their women are molested they should learn to defend them. Why my brethren in many of the cities of this Union colored men this very day, I am sure, and every day, walk the streets with their women, their wives, their sweet-hearts upon their arms and permit blackguards and ruffians to throw insults at them as they walk in their company. Is it not true? And as they walk the streets of this city—this northern city—our Chicago—it often happens that men presume because they see it is a colored woman on the street cars, on the streets and elsewhere that they may approach them with a familiarity that is not decent. Our men must come to the place when they will not permit it and our women should conduct themselves with such dignity and propriety as not to invite insult.

I am a minister of the gospel and a man of peace; but the day that any man insults one of mine, I shall resent it with emphasis. And this is one of the lessons, if our womanhood is to be elevated, that men must learn, that that womanhood has protectors and defenders. Another duty that we owe to our women is to support them as far possible; take them not into the struggle for winning of bread, but give them that opportunity, as far as it is in your power, for the development of those higher graces and qualities which are peculiar to the sex by supporting them properly in the home.

These are some of the lessons that our manhood must learn if we are to come up. How long O Lord, how long! I speak to-night, men, not simply as a minister, but I speak as brother to brother, I speak as friend to friend; the work that we have to do means more than the service of religion, more than the work of the political reformer and of the legislator; it means that our manhood shall take a stand for the protection and support of our womanhood. The time has come now, in the condition in which we stand in this country, that any Negro that will defile or debauch or degrade one of our little ones of the gentler sex is worse than a wild beast of prey; while I could not utter anything from this pulpit that would cause any man to perform an unworthy action that would lead to wrong, I believe that the men that lie in wait like a wild beast of the forest to destroy the virtue and uprightness of our women, should be treated like a wild beast.

We have got some lessons to learn. Mark my words to night, brothers! Our womanhood can never shine in all the beauty and dignity and glory which is in store for it until it has our protection, until our women become our queens at whose feet we lay the richest trophies and highest honors we can win in the field of high endeavor.

"We wish to the I. B. W. Club, Godspeed, that no dissension may mar it that it may be worthy of the name it bears, that in good works it may be led up into still larger fields. And now, as to that peculiar grace that belongs to our womanhood and its charm, I want to recite, in concluding this sermon, the beautiful lines by Mrs. M. E. Lee,

wife of Bishop Lee.

“With cheeks as soft as roses are,
And yet as brown as chesnuts dark,
And eyes that borrow from the star,
A tranquil, brilliant spark,
Or face of olive with a glow
Of carmine on the lip and cheek,
The hair in wavelets falling low,
With jet or hazel eyes that speak,
Or brow of pure Caucasian hue,
With auburn or with flaxen hair,
And eyes that beam in liquid blue
A perfect type of Saxon fair:
Behold this strange this well knows maid
Of every hue, of every shade.
O, ye, her brothers, husbands, friends,
Be brave, be true, be pure and strong,
For on your manly strength depends
Her firm security from wrong.
O, let your strong right arm be bold,
And on that lovely courtesy
Which marked the chevaliers of old,
Buttress her home with love and care;
Secure her those amenities
Which make a woman’s life most dear;
Give her your warmest sympathies;
Thus high her aspiration rise
For nobler deeds in coming days.





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That has been the unhappy history and condition which our women have had to pass through all these dark and weary years. The wonder is that our womanhood has not been sunken and debased beyond all measure of comprehension. And after a few years our womanhood can look up to our manhood as one who has no master but God, who stands in the relation to her of protector. To-day her husband is her 'lord' and her 'king.' She has no other or should have.

Women are natural hero-worshippers, more so than men; and there must be something akin to the hero in a man to take a woman's heart by storm, and to hold her affection and devotion throughout the years. But the kind of heroes that we have presented have not been very inspiring, and the women among us who have had some cultivation and some intelligence, have found in the ranks of our men in the years that have past so few who were their equals. If our men desire to keep our women strong and pure and good and hold their admiration, they must show to our women on the one hand, that they have independence and strength, and on the other, they must stand on an equal plane with other men everywhere.

When our colored women as they walk the streets of our cities, see the hosts of colored men whose personal appearance is such that as they look upon them, they can feel no swellings of pride, this fact, has a tendency to render them a prey to temptation. I am glad that the time is coming, and has come, when the preacher is not the only man in the community who wears Sunday clothes through the week; because when there is only one man, or only two or three men who thus appear on other days except on Sunday, it is dangerous. When our women walk the streets of the city day by day, morning, afternoon and night and see white men with clean clothes on, their shoes well polished, with every appearance of gentility; and then when they meet our men clumping along, looking all sorts of ways, it does not give to them that pride in our manhood which is one of the necessary elements to add to their strength. But now, as we have said, the time has come when our men are becoming to our women their kings, their princes and their protectors; and that is having the tendency to add unto their

strength. Our women have had within the last thirty years the inspiring spectacle of placing their aspirations and their hopes upon the development and the training of their children; and they have been permitted to see their children, for whom they have made so many sacrifices, reach the goal, pass through the courses in our schools, in our colleges, in our universities and take respectable places in life.

A man said to me within the past week, that one of the most inspiring spectacles he had ever beheld was, when some years ago, the man who stands before you to-night, stood before two or three thousand people, after years of sacrifice, to speak his oration upon the day of his graduation. At the conclusion of that speech, while many were shouting and applauding, a woman arose from the audience, pushed her way through the crowd, made her way up to the platform, pushed by the dignitaries that were seated there, came and fell with her arms about him, and with her hot tears falling upon his cheek and almost smothered him with kisses there. It was my mother: and he said, when he took that woman by the hand, he was almost shocked: he said, "that hand was as rough and as hard as the hand of some laboring man." But that hand had grown hard through the sacrifices inspired by love and maternal affection that her boy might reach the goal of his ambition, and that she might give him to the world to make an honorable place in life.

What was the inspiration of that mother (she was almost a God to me,) has been the inspiration of thousands of others all over this country within the last thirty years. And these are some of the experiences that are new which our women are learning. Our women have seen, or have begun to see, the beginnings of social life and culture. We find that we are not cultured yet, that social life among us is very crude, we have only the rudiments of it. Time was when all colored people indiscriminately mixed and mingled together, and if you refused to mix and mingle they would stone you as the Jews stoned Stephen. But there is coming a time—the day is almost at hand—when the better elements among us are beginning to class themselves together and they are saying to those who are not fit for respectable association; if you want to stand on this plane, you must qualify yourself by virtue, by intelligence and culture so to stand." It has long been the custom to class all colored people together without regard to intelligence, morals or manners, but as we have said, we are beginning to find the rudiments of social life and that which may be with some propriety called society is beginning to make its appearance among us. If the lines are drawn with wisdom and intelligence, it will be for the advancement of our race and a blessed thing. If you were to ask me where is the society of Chicago? I would have to tell you I do not know. It is none of my business either. I was not sent here for that purpose, neither for that purpose did I come, having a mission to all mankind, I love good and bad. But while that is true upon the one hand, it ought also to be true on the other hand that the lines would be so drawn that men who disgrace their manhood could not sit in the parlors of the respectable, that the man who, perhaps had the day before been in a place of questionable resort, or in the gambling "hells" of this city, could appear in the open gaze of the world with the best of our women leaning on his arm; that our men could not have, as they do have in some cities, "one girl down town and another girl up town."

But we are making a beginning and the better elements among us, through the inspiration and growth of a better sentiment among our

women, are beginning to appear and to stamp with the seal of their disapproval that which tends to blight and mar the better life of our people. Our womanhood is getting a back-ground which is permitting nobler qualities to be brought out. The best qualities of our womanhood could not be brought out against that dark and terrible back-ground against which it had to stand during all the centuries of its life in this country; but now our women are getting a back-ground—the back-ground of a home, which they can call their own—with their husband, their protector standing there and their children round about them. With that back-ground their nobler qualities are beginning to shine out and cause them to compare favorably with other elements of the womanhood of this country. Not only is this true but they are getting a back ground which is permitting their virtues to shine out and men are beginning to discover that the character and the virtue and the strength of our womanhood are not things that can be invaded at will. Our womanhood is beginning to lift its eyes beyond the horizon of its doorsteps. Just yesterday, so to speak, have they begun to do this, for they have been so busy in the last few years within the home; but now we are beginning to produce a class of women who lift up their eyes and are looking beyond their doorstep and they are beginning to study and think upon the great questions that affect them and the country at large and that affect all the larger interests of our whole life.

This is only the beginning. The signs have only just appeared within the past few years; but in almost every avenue, in almost every line of endeavor, our womanhood is showing its capabilities to take its place side by side with our manhood in the field of action in the greatest and largest questions of our day and time.

The organization which has come to worship with us to-night has a few representatives of this new departure upon the part of our women into the larger fields. And I want to say to the ladies that I honor you for doing honor to an honorable and a worthy woman. We have had so few women who have had an opportunity to distinguish themselves upon the larger fields of action. And when one has gone into the rich fields of endeavor and distinguished herself there, we should give her all honor that her deeds and achievements may be an inspiration to the young girls that shall come after her. Honor to whom honor is due. I speak no words of fulsome praise. The organization which meets here to-night has honored itself and honored Chicago and honored the womanhood of the race by taking the name it bears, "The I. B. W. Woman's Club," a name which is known in almost every portion of the Western Hemisphere where the English language is spoken. A girl who started out in one of our southern cities as an orphan girl, left without mother or father at an early age, without protector or defender, by the strength of her own character she was mother and father, protector and friend to the brothers and sisters who had been left with her orphaned thus; going out as a girl to be an instructor and teacher of her people, and whenever her womanhood was trampled upon, standing up with all courage in defense not only of her womanhood but her citizen rights. When the men of Tennessee, standing face to face with the blood of their brethren who had been murdered in cold blood crying from the ground were silent, this girl had the courage to speak out, the courage to speak the courageous word when the men and the manhood of the race ought to have rushed to the defense. For this she was compelled to be an exile or forfeit her life

and started upon this mission to most of the larger centers of this country which heard such invective, such eloquence, such denunciation, such appeals to righteousness and truth under the constitution and the laws as this country had never heard before. She met the opposition of leading men of the race, in the church and in politics; they thought it was a mistake. And yet she pushed her crusade in this country and across the waters until she filled the world with the cry of the Negro's wrongs. She so rung the story of the outrages in this country into the ears and into the hearts of the American people, that now the great metropolitan dailies in this country and the public sentiment of England have been aroused: I say this to-night because I want to weave, while preaching to this club, a crown of evergreen and place it on the brow of that little woman who has wrought so gloriously in this cause for our race. And this after thirty years is an illustration of the kind of women that we can produce. She did not do it for fame; she did not do it for money. I have tramped the streets with her through the wind and the storm and rain, in mud and mire, that she might go to assemblies of men of influence and power and there plead to them the story of our wrongs and seek redress. And what I have known her to do she has done all over this country, so that to-night while receiving these guests with their honored name, we do double honor, by giving honor to whom honor is due. A character like that, God builds for war, he has got to make them in a certain way so they can fight: and he fixed her up with that kind of courage. He did not send her into this world to weave bouquets and to make apologies for wrongs; but to speak straight out and talk right on: so that we have some of the first fruits of our womanhood here to-night. And while she has wrought in this field, in almost all of the larger fields her womanhood is beginning to secure a foothold.

We have perhaps foremost among the women that are engaged in the work of training our girls, that matchless woman Fannie Jackson Coppin who in her school in Philadelphia, has accomplished a wonderful work--an illustration of the growing strength of our womanhood and we have in art Edmonia Lewis, who has won for herself a respectable place; and we have one of the first in that line, Hallie Quinn Brown, our elocutionist who now in London, has gained some notoriety; and we have in song as one of the first fruits in that line, Selika--all honor to Selika the pioneer!

Now the hosts have come and are following in her footsteps. But these women among others have begun to make the way possible. In the field of literature and journalism there is rising up a host. One in our city is taking a respectable place--that is Mrs. Fannie B. Williams.

So Chicago and Philadelphia and the little country-sides are coming to the front with a type of womanhood that our race can produce. Now, another phase--and I shall detain you but a few moments more. These clubs are formed of the very best heart and very best brain of our race to study the great questions of domestic economy, questions that relate to the home; and I tell you my friends, that if ever there was a class of women that needed to study these questions, it is our women. They are not only studying questions domestic, but questions intellectual and questions social and questions political; and the organization which is here to-night, "The I. B. W. Woman's Club," is only one of a great number that are springing up in different parts of the country. Our womanhood is becoming aroused and awakened;

and I only pray God that our manhood may be worthy of it.

And now, men, the thing that we must do is to protect this womanhood. Why is all this trouble in the country from time to time about white men putting to death with impunity colored men? Why they say, "Our womanhood has been molested and the man that defiles our womanhood we will crush; we will kill." There is one thing that the Negroes of this country want to learn and that is to respect its womanhood, not to accost them too familiarly upon the streets; but with all dignity and honor; and then when their women are molested they should learn to defend them. Why my brethren in many of the cities of this Union colored men this very day, I am sure, and every day, walk the streets with their women, their wives, their sweet-hearts upon their arms and permit blackguards and ruffians to throw insults at them as they walk in their company. Is it not true? And as they walk the streets of this city—this northern city—our Chicago—it often happens that men presume because they see it is a colored woman on the street cars, on the streets and elsewhere that they may approach them with a familiarity that is not decent. Our men must come to the place when they will not permit it and our women should conduct themselves with such dignity and propriety as not to invite insult.

I am a minister of the gospel and a man of peace; but the day that any man insults one of mine, I shall resent it with emphasis. And this is one of the lessons, if our womanhood is to be elevated, that men must learn, that that womanhood has protectors and defenders. Another duty that we owe to our women is to support them as far possible; take them not into the struggle for winning of bread, but give them that opportunity, as far as it is in your power, for the development of those higher graces and qualities which are peculiar to the sex by supporting them properly in the home.

These are some of the lessons that our manhood must learn if we are to come up. How long O LORD, how long! I speak to-night, men, not simply as a minister, but I speak as brother to brother, I speak as friend to friend; the work that we have to do means more than the service of religion, more than the work of the political reformer and of the legislator; it means that our manhood shall take a stand for the protection and support of our womanhood. The time has come now, in the condition in which we stand in this country, that any Negro that will defile or debauch or degrade one of our little ones of the gentler sex is worse than a wild beast of prey; while I could not utter anything from this pulpit that would cause any man to perform an unworthy action that would lead to wrong, I believe that the men that lie in wait like a wild beast of the forest to destroy the virtue and uprightness of our women, should be treated like a wild beast.

We have got some lessons to learn. Mark my words to night, brothers! Our womanhood can never shine in all the beauty and dignity and glory which is in store for it until it has our protection; until our women become our queens at whose feet we lay the richest trophies and highest honors we can win in the field of high endeavor.

"We wish to the I. B. W. Club, Godspeed, that no dissension may mar it that it may be worthy of the name it bears, that in good works it may be led up into still larger fields. And now, as to that peculiar grace that belongs to our womanhood and its charm, I want to recite, in concluding this sermon, the beautiful lines by Mrs. M. E. Lee,

wife of Bishop Lee.

“With cheeks as soft as roses are,
And yet as brown as chesnuts dark,
And eyes that borrow from the star,
A tranquil, brilliant spark,
Or face of olive with a glow
Of carmine on the lip and cheek,
The hair in wavelets falling low,
With jet or hazel eyes that speak,
Or brow of pure Caucasian hue,
With auburn or with flaxen hair,
And eyes that beam in liquid blue
A perfect type of Saxon fair:
Behold this strange this well knows maid

Of every hue, of every shade.
O, ye, her brothers, husbands, friends,
Be brave, be true, be pure and strong,
For on your manly strength depends
Her firm security from wrong.
O, let your strong right arm be bold,
And on that lovely courtesy
Which marked the chevaliers of old,
Buttress her home with love and care;
Secure her those amenities
Which make a woman's life most dear;
Give her your warmest sympathies;
Thus high her aspiration rise
For nobler deeds in coming days.

